

“BETWIXT THE GREEKS AND THE SARACENS” : COINS AND COINAGE IN CYPRUS IN THE SEVENTH AND THE EIGHTH CENTURY

Sedebant inter Graecos et Saracenos et inermes fuerunt, quia pax maxima fuit et conciliatio inter Saracenos et Graecos ⁽¹⁾; these are the words an English pilgrim, Willibald, used to describe the people living on the island of Cyprus in 723 A.D. Cryptic as it is, Willibald's testimony, however, effectively summarizes the strategic role the third largest island of the Mediterranean has historically played from the pre-historic period onwards ⁽²⁾. Located astride the shipping routes linking southern Asia Minor with the coasts of Syria and Palestine and Egypt, the island has always been regarded as a stepping-stone of the cultural and economic communications interconnecting different areas of the eastern half of the Mediterranean ⁽³⁾.

Politically this role has been first enhanced during the Hellenistic, Roman ⁽⁴⁾ and eventually late antique period, when- at the end of the fourth century, the Roman province of Cyprus, was included in the Diocese of the Orient, as a part of the Prefecture of Orient (which included Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Cilicia, Isauria and Arabia). Later, with the reform of the provincial organization by Justinian in 535 A.D. the island became part of the *quaestura exercitus* ⁽⁵⁾, established in

(1) HUNEBERG OF HEIDENHEIM, *The Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald*, p. 116 ; on his trip see also the commentary of McCORMICK, *Origins*, pp. 129-135.

(2) For an overview of the history of Cyprus in the Byzantine period see mainly HILL, *History of Cyprus* ; KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus* ; DIKIGOROPOULOS, *Cyprus 'betwixt Greeks and Saracens'* ; MEGAW, *"Betwixt Greeks and Saracens"* ; BRYER - GEORGHALLIDES, *The Sweet Land of Cyprus* ; ŠEVČENKO - MOSS, *Medieval Cyprus* ; PAPA-COSTAS, *Byzantine Cyprus* ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, and PAPADOPOULLOS, *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*.

(3) WICKHAM, *The Mediterranean around 800*, pp. 161-162.

(4) On Cyprus in the Roman period see MITFORD, *Roman Cyprus* with further bibliography.

(5) The most recent summary of the *status questionis* concerning the *quaestura exercitus* can be found in GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS, *Περιφερειακή διοίκηση*.

Caria and Aegean islands to secure supplies and a sound base for the Danubian frontier units, while avoiding further impoverishing an already devastated region ⁽⁶⁾. The governor of Cyprus until 649 A.D. was, then, an *hypatikos* or *consularis* appointed by Constantinople and concentrating in his hands all the authority including the collection of revenues. Cyprus, indeed, was not affected by the separation of military from civic command because it was an unharmed province ⁽⁷⁾.

However, the peaceful character of the local lifestyle was soon to change, Cyprus having acquired an important role as military Byzantine stronghold ; a role which — as will be seen — can be assessed through the analysis of the numismatic (and sigillographic) material as paired with the (scarce) documentary and literary evidence. In the first half of the sixth century, Cyprus acted as a shelter from the Persian storm which ravaged the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire and then as a launching pad for the Heraclian “*reconquista*” in 626-629 A.D. ⁽⁸⁾ which led to the final defeat of the Persian empire. Moreover, when in the first half of the seventh century the Arab invasions drove the Byzantines out of Syria and Palestine, the enhancement of this role was inevitably interrelated with the escalating political and military confrontation of two powerful polities : the Byzantine empire and the Umayyad Caliphate. This confrontation heavily involved and moulded the historical trajectories of Cyprus, which was repeatedly hit by the Muslim fleet and partially occupied in the mid-seventh century ⁽⁹⁾, becoming a strategically longed prize in the battle for the naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean between the two empires. Eventually, during the last decade of the seventh century the conflict ended in the notorious – but debated – “*condominium*” regime ⁽¹⁰⁾ and the sharing of the Cypriot tax revenues between the Byzantines and the Arabs (the condition Willibald referred to). As will be seen, this increasing military importance is (at least partially) mirrored in the numismatic evidence.

(6) HALDON, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 210.

(7) KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus*, p. 161.

(8) On this mainly KÆGI, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 246ff. ; also KÆGI, *Heraclius*.

(9) DIKIGOROPOULOS, *Cyprus ‘betwixt Greeks and Saracens’*; KYRRIS, *The Nature* ; MEGAW, “*Betwixt Greeks and Saracens*” ; CHRISTIDES, *The Image of Cyprus*, and METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 395-423.

(10) See on this also KÆGI, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, p. 253.

Economically, the significance of Cyprus in the passage from the late antiquity to the early middle ages should not be underestimated : the island and — as proved by recent archaeological excavation ⁽¹¹⁾ — the harbours and coves on its southern coast, played an essential role as hub along the eastern tax-spine route through which Egypt fed Constantinople from the fourth to the mid-seventh century ⁽¹²⁾ ; moreover, the long-distance trade-routes based upon the sea-movement of luxury goods, inevitably passed through Cyprus on their way to the markets of Constantinople or Rome ⁽¹³⁾. Beside, although a real analysis of the ceramic evidence — the best guide to the scale of the economic system — is missing for Cyprus ⁽¹⁴⁾, one could not overlook the fact that long distance commerce was itself generated as a spin-off, by the intensity and structural coherence of interregional exchange ⁽¹⁵⁾ ; this led to the appreciation of the location of the island at the intersection of three regional economies : Egypt, with its complex hierarchy of regional, sub-regional and micro-regional productions, underpinned by the high productive levels of Nilotic agriculture and, with Alexandria as a hub for luxury trade ; Syria and Palestine with their localized economies, focused upon continuous demand of urban centres like Jerusalem, Pella, Jerash, Scythopolis, and Aleppo ⁽¹⁶⁾ (to cite only a few of them) and its productive complexity (as pointed out by high-quality local ceramic productions well into the eighth century ⁽¹⁷⁾ ; and, eventually, the Aegean heartland of the Byzantine empire where localized and medium-distance exchange systems coexisted, as focused on Constantinople ; the latter privileging the major political centres, but also cities where aristocratic wealth remained urban oriented (as Ephesos, Gortyn and Athens) ⁽¹⁸⁾.

(11) BAKIRTZIS, *The Role of Cyprus* ; IDEM, *A sea-route from Cyprus* ; PAPACOSTAS, *The economy of Late Antique Cyprus*, p. 113 ; RAUTMANN, *The busy countryside* ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 230-231.

(12) TEALL, *The grain supply* ; WICKHAM, *The Inheritance*, pp. 40-43.

(13) MCCORMICK, *Origins*, pp. 708-716. For a general overview of the Cypriot harbours and anchorages in the Roman period see LEONARD, *Evidence for Roman ports*.

(14) See the brief but detailed summary in METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 229-246 with further bibliography. Also PAPACOSTAS, *The economy of Late Antique Cyprus*, JACOBSEN, *Transport Amphorae*, and ARMSTRONG, *Trade in the east Mediterranean*.

(15) WICKHAM, *The Mediterranean around 800*, p. 165.

(16) WALMSLEY, *Early Islamic Syria*, pp. 71-112.

(17) WALMSLEY, *Economic Development*, pp. 341ff.

(18) ZAVAGNO, *Cities in Transition*.

As will be seen, the multifunctional role of Cyprus as a bridge between different regions of the eastern Mediterranean is — although only partially — reflected by the numismatic evidence I am presenting here. To this, one should naturally add the analysis of lead seals recently presented by Metcalf⁽¹⁹⁾, the results of the archaeological excavations conducted in urban centres like Salamis-Constantia, Nea-Paphos and Saranda Kolones, and Kourion, and the freshly published survey of the rural villages of the Cypriot mainland⁽²⁰⁾, which all contribute to draw a complex political, social, cultural and economic picture of the island in the passage from late antiquity to the early middle ages (i.e. between 500 to 800 A.D.). There is no space here to grasp part of this image as mirrored in the numismatic evidence of a limited time-span such as the seventh and early eighth century ; a period of great and turbulent changes within the entire Levant, which often epitomized the events involving the ‘sweet land of Cyprus’⁽²¹⁾.

INTERREGNUM (608-610 A.D.)

The seventh century was a very difficult period for the Byzantine empire, which, as Judith Herrin as stated was almost destroyed first by a decade of warfare with Persia in the 620s, then by the persistent Slav raiding into the Balkan provinces and, eventually, by the Arab tribes overrunning the Arabian Peninsula and establishing an Islamic caliphate as permanent rival to Christian Byzantium⁽²²⁾. The century opened with a series of military debacles both on the Persian front and in the Balkans where the Byzantine military presence essentially evaporated and cities were left to their own defences against plundering groups of Avars and Slavs⁽²³⁾. The empire spiralled into a situation of

(19) METCALF, *Byzantine Lead Seals* ; IDEM, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 69-140.

(20) On Salamis-Constantia see mainly YON, *Salamine de Chypre*, and CALLOT, *Salamine de Chypre* ; on Kourion see MEGAW, *Kourion* ; on Paphos see PAPAGEORGHIU, *Cities and Countryside*, and METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 457-460 ; on Saranda-Kolones see MEGAW, *Saranda Kolones* ; ROSSER, *Excavations at Saranda Kolones*, and METCALF, *Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader Coins*. For an overview of the five different survey projects on the Cypriot hinterland see PAPACOSTAS, *The economy of Late Antique Cyprus* with further bibliography.

(21) BRYER - GEORGHALLIDES, *The Sweet Land of Cyprus*'.

(22) HERRIN, *Byzantium*, p. 83.

(23) GREGORY, *A History of Byzantium*, p. 156.

political instability and military revolts which in 608 A.D. forced the Senate of Constantinople to appeal to Heraclius, the Exarch of Carthage; he rebelled and sent his son Heraclius and his nephew Nicetas with troops and a fleet to overthrow the Emperor Phocas, who had no troops to meet the challenge and suffered the almost immediate defection of Egypt (fallen into Nicetas' hands in 609 A.D.) which cut the grain supply to Constantinople. Meanwhile, Heraclius at the head of the rebels' fleet reached and took Cyprus, regarded as an ideal naval base for the final assault on Constantinople.

Raising supporters among discontent provincials, the younger Heraclius arrived outside Constantinople on 3 October 610, and Phocas' government collapsed almost immediately: the emperor was executed [... and] on 5 October Heraclius entered Constantinople and was crowned emperor by the Patriarch Sergius ⁽²⁴⁾.

During this revolt, the rebel party struck coins in the joint name of Heraclius the elder (the nominal leader of the revolt) and his son Heraclius the younger ⁽²⁵⁾. A wide series of gold, silver and copper coins was issued at Carthage in 608-610; at Alexandria of Egypt (gold coins struck in 608-610 and undated copper coins); in Cyprus (copper in 610 A.D.) and possibly at Alexandretta in Syria ⁽²⁶⁾. Indeed, as Grierson pointed out, this was the first occasion during the Byzantine period when a mint was active in Cyprus (possibly in the capital of the island, Salamis-Constantia) ⁽²⁷⁾. The Cypriot mint was one of the three, which issued copper coins (the others being Carthage and Alexandretta (Figure 1)). Characteristically, the Cypriot coinage of the revolt included different denominations (which still remain partially obscure as the recent discovery of a two-*nummia* piece from the Cypriot mint has pointed out ⁽²⁸⁾): *folis* (with on the obverse busts of the two Heraclius

(24) *Ibidem*. On the revolt see MANGO-SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 460ff.

(25) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 159-162.

(26) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 6.

(27) D.O.C., II, p. 208.

(28) BENDALL, *A new coin*. Recently, the still-unpublished excavations at a pilgrimage basilica in the Akrotiri peninsula have yielded two coins belonging to this period: a five-*nummia* dated to 610 A.D. and minted at Carthage and a six-*nummia* coin dated to 610-611 and issued by the Alexandrian mint (Eleni Prokopios's communication at CAARI conference *Byzantine Cyprus: From Justinian to Richard Coeur de Lion*).



FIG. 1. — Follis issued in Alexandretta. Obv.: Heraclius Senior and Heraclius the younger wearing consular robes standing; cross between the heads. Rev.: M, + above, Γ below; ANNO/XIII; in ex., ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔ.

wearing consular robes with the younger in the place of honour and the fictional title CONSULII (never held by Heraclius, providing the younger with an authoritative title before becoming an emperor ⁽²⁹⁾); and, on the rev. M with the *officina* letter and the anomalous dating system including either regnal year (counted from the beginning of the revolt [ANNO III]) or the indictional year [ANNO XIII for 609-610 A.D.] with the mint mark KVPRON or KVPRU or KVPR' or KVP or CPR); *decanummia* (bearing the indictional date ANNO XIII or the regnal one ANNO III and divided into two types on the basis of the mark of value on the reverse ⁽³⁰⁾); finally, the recently discovered *two-nummia* piece (Figure 2) with facing jugate busts of Heraclius and his father and a

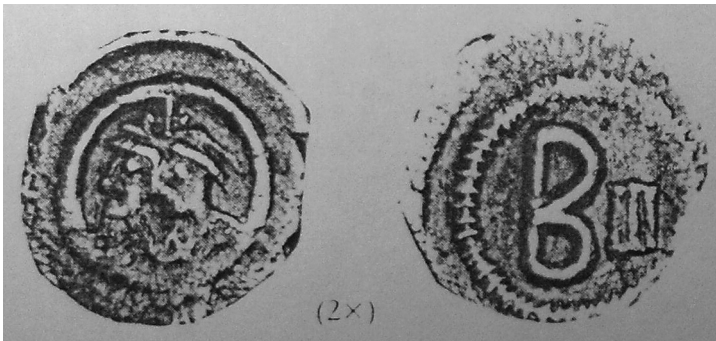


FIG. 2. — Two-Nummia piece with facing jugate busts of Heraclius and his father on the obverse (from BENDALL).

(29) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 7.

(30) B.N.C., I, p. 252.

cross above ⁽³¹⁾. According to Callot ⁽³²⁾, the excavations at Salamis have yielded one specimen struck in Alexandretta ⁽³³⁾ (a follis), which could possibly point to the peculiar links between the main bases of the rebellion.

REIGN OF HERACLIUS (610-641 A.D.) ⁽³⁴⁾

The reign of Heraclius brought about the strengthening of the military importance of Cyprus as a strategic stronghold along the naval routes to the Levant, which had almost entirely fallen into Persian hands. Chrysos traced back this newly acquired importance of the island to a supposed Persian incursion ⁽³⁵⁾, although the only reference to a possible Persian occupation ⁽³⁶⁾ is mentioned in the Life of St. John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria, written by Leontios of Neapolis in the mid-seventh century. Here it is, indeed, stated that a general named Asparagurius had been sent to Constantia but was not admitted to the town. So he prepared himself for war against its citizens and their were preparing to take arms against him ⁽³⁷⁾. Only the intervention of the Patriarch head the escalation off ⁽³⁸⁾. Although the sources are unclear, it should be admitted that both the conquest and the later Byzantine re-conquista (which remains undocumented) stemmed from the strategic relevance of the island as a military maritime hub: the strong presence of Heraclius's copper coinage in Cyprus reflects the position of the island as a way station between Syria and Constantinople from where the Byzantines could supply Syria with fresh coins ⁽³⁹⁾.

(31) BENDALL, *A new coin*, p. 223.

(32) CALLOT, *Salamine de Chypre*, p. 53. On this also METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 160.

(33) The problem of the identification of the unparalleled mintmark ALEXANA on the interregnum coins with Alexandretta has been devised by GRIERSON (D.O.C., II, pp. 41ff.), FOSS (*Arab-Byzantine Coins*, pp. 6-7), and BORKOWSKY (*Les monnaies de la révolte*, pp. 139ff.).

(34) For a political overview of Heraclius's reign see mainly KÆGI, *Heraclius*.

(35) CHRYSOS, "Cyprus", p. 12.

(36) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 383-385.

(37) DELEHAYE, *Une vie inédite*, 3.15.

(38) PAPACOSTAS, *The economy of Late Antique Cyprus*, p. 108.

(39) GEORGANTELI-SHEA, *Numismatic Considerations*, p. 3; MCCORMICK, *Origins*, p. 113.

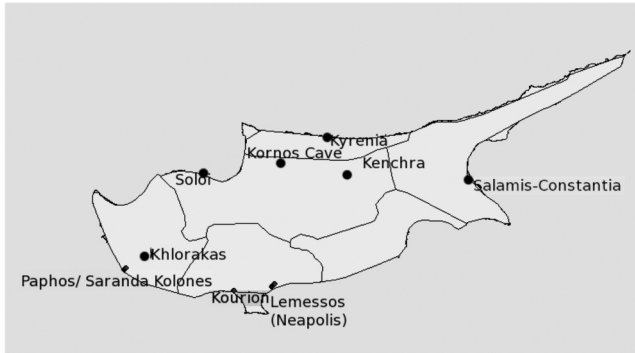


FIG. 3. — Location of the copper coins hoards found in Cyprus.

Indeed, this role mirrors into the high quantity of copper coins (belonging to the reign of Heraclius) yielded by the excavations at Paphos-Saranda Kolones⁽⁴⁰⁾, Kourion (basilica)⁽⁴¹⁾ and Salamis-Constantia⁽⁴²⁾, the large amount of stray finds (like those coming from the mysterious site of Khlorakas⁽⁴³⁾) and the four hoards discovered in the islands between the nineteenth and twentieth century (in Kyrenia, Kharcha, Soli and at an unknown location⁽⁴⁴⁾) (Figure 3). Among the specimens of this period, a series of *folles* seems particularly important⁽⁴⁵⁾. This series bears on the obverse the standing figure of Heraclius, flanked by his son Heraclius Constantine and Epiphania⁽⁴⁶⁾ and, on the reverse, the M mark value, with KVPR on the exergue); it dates to the years 17-19 (626-629 A.D.) of Heraclius' reign (Figure 4)⁽⁴⁷⁾.

(40) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 284ff.

(41) MEGAW, *Kourion*.

(42) CALLOT, *Salamine de Chypre*.

(43) METCALF, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, pp. 59-61.

(44) See on this GOODWIN - PHILLIPS, *Arab-Byzantine coinage*, p. 85. These coins were also found most frequently in Syria and Lebanon (METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 163). The high quantity of copper coins also mirrors in the peak of lead seals found on the island and dated to the first half of the seventh century (see METCALF, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, p. 31).

(45) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 163-164.

(46) According to Wroth's description (B.M.C., I, p. 222), each figure wears a crown and cross a long robes and holds in the right hand the *globus crucigerus*; Heraclius has a close beard whereas the hair of Epiphania falls in two long tresses (see below p. 458).

(47) D.O.C., II, pp. 62ff.; B.M.C., I, p. 222; B.N.C., I, p. 291.



FIG. 4. — Follis (D.O.C. 185bis). Obv. : Heraclius, Heraclius Constantine and Martina standing facing ; Rev. : M, + above, Γ below ; ANNO/XIII ; in ex., KVTP.

Indeed, these coins were, in all probability, struck as military issues, indicating that an army was formed in Cyprus preparatory to recovering the Eastern provinces from Persia ⁽⁴⁸⁾. The enhancement of the military importance of Cyprus ⁽⁴⁹⁾ — spawned by the crisis following the catastrophic Persian invasion (as pointed out by the emergency issues struck at Seleucia by Heraclius ⁽⁵⁰⁾) — could be also asserted from the analysis of the sigillographic evidence, since the titles *primicerius* and *cubicularius* (offices of the central administration) unusual among the Cypriot finds, appear on a little group of seals found on the island. These seals show a distinctive Heraclian monogram on the obverse and all present a pair of titles, office, rank or double office, leading Metcalf to date them to the same period as the minting of copper coins ⁽⁵¹⁾.

(48) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 17. Alternatively H. POTTIER and I. & W. SCHULTZE (*Pseudo-Byzantine Coinage*) suggest that these coins were of a piece with a bribe paid to the Persian general in Syria.

(49) And possibly its significance as main source of raw copper (METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 163).

(50) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 11-12.

(51) METCALF, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, pp. 72-73 ; however, it must be noticed that a most accurate analysis of these seals has proved that we are in presence not of a Heraclian monogram but of two standing figures (one with nimbate head). The date of the seals is, however, secure. I am very grateful to Vivien Prigent for this remark.

These specimens, indeed, could point to the persistence of the redistributive fiscal role of the Byzantine state, although the fact that troops were paid in copper coins also show the dramatic lack of gold revenues in the conditions prevailing during the Persian invasion ⁽⁵²⁾.

The "military issues" came into two types ⁽⁵³⁾: one round and well struck (three specimens of this type have been found in Antioch) and the other roughly struck on oval flans. The latter most certainly belongs to a series of imitations produced in Syria in 638-647 A.D. which — as will be seen — became the earliest exemplary of Arab-Byzantine coinage. These imitations could also suggest that the coinage was transported from Cyprus to the Levant (possibly together with the troops for the reoccupation after the Persian invasion), where it came to have considerable influence ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Together with the locally-struck copper coinage, the evidence of hoards and coins yielded by excavations have revealed that copper coins reached Cyprus as struck by different Byzantine mints like Thessalonica, Cyzicus, Nicomedia, Seleucia, Alexandria and, naturally, Constantinople. The coins recovered show diverse denominations: *folles*, *half-folles*, thirty *nummia*, twelve *nummia*, and six *nummia*. Among these, I would like here to highlight the twelve *nummia* specimens struck in Alexandria and found in different Cypriot sites (Salamis-Constantia, Kourion and Saranda-Kolones), but mainly in Khlorakas (five km. north of Paphos) where they overcome the number of Heraclian *folles* and so seem to point to the important role played by the south-western harbours and coves (like Coral Bay / Agios Georgios) in the shipping routes from Egypt to Constantinople ⁽⁵⁵⁾. As Metcalf points out, it is indeed possible that these coins remained in circulation even after the Arab conquest of Alexandria and where imported in Cyprus by the Arab garrison installed in Paphos in 653 A.D. ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

It is also worth noticing another specimen of *folles* type, found at Salamis-Constantia, with Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine flanked by the a feminine figure originally identified as Martina, but recently

(52) HALDON, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, p. 224.

(53) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 17.

(54) *Ibidem*.

(55) MEGAW, "Betwixt Greeks and Saracens"; BAKIRTZIS, *The Role of Cyprus*; RAUTMAN, *The busy countryside*.

(56) METCALF, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, p. 61.

recognized as Epiphania, the daughter of Heraclius, crowned as Eudocia in 612 A.D. ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

As previously mentioned, however, the coinage found in Cyprus and belonging to the Heraclian period did not reach the island only from the mints of the Byzantine heartland but also from the close regions of the Levant. Here, during the brief post-Persian restoration and the first years of the Arab invasions (in 634 A.D. Arab forces penetrated into Palestine and won significant victories near Gaza and East of the Dead Sea ; Damascus fell in 635 A.D. and, at the decisive battle of Yarmuk river, the Byzantine forces were catastrophically defeated withdrawing from the region ⁽⁵⁸⁾), the empire was not able to re-establish regular coin circulation ⁽⁵⁹⁾). Indeed, many issues (mostly the small and light coins of the last years of Heraclius) reached Syria and Palestine (where, however, also locally minted copper coins started being produced) from Constantinople (possibly via Cyprus). Among these, one should include the so-called “enigmatic *folles*” (Figure 5) struck between 634-636 A.D. (regnal years 25 or 26) and bearing the intriguing mint-mark NEA on the exergue ⁽⁶⁰⁾. This mark had been originally referred to Neapolis (Limassol) in Cyprus, where, indeed, occasionally specimens of this type



FIG 5. — So-called “enigmatic *folles*” (from Foss, *Arab Byzantine Coinage*, p. 14). Obv. : Heraclius in military dress, Heraclius Constantine in chlamys ; standig k between the heads. Rev. : M, monogram above ; in ex., NEA.

(57) CALLOT, *Salamine de Chypre*, p. 59.

(58) KAEGI, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 66-146.

(59) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 14.

(60) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, pp. 14-17.



FIG 6. — Countermarked coins (*follis* and *half-follis*) from Heraclius' reign ; dated to 633-636 possibly from Cesarea Maritima (D.O.C., 314).

1. Obv. : Heraclius in military dress holding long cross, Heraclius Constantine in chlamys, holding a *globus cruciger* ; + between the heads.

Rev. : M, + and C above, Δ below ; ANNO I., XX r. ; in ex. CON.

2. Obv. : Heraclius in military dress holding long cross, Heraclius Constantine in chlamys, holding a *globus cruciger* ; + between the heads.

Rev. : K, + above, XX r., Γ below.

have been found. Recent investigations have, however, belied this hypothesis, identifying the mint with Nablus (Neapolis) in Palestine. Again, here, we are dealing with a possible wartime issue during the Arab attack ⁽⁶¹⁾. Things being so, the presence of these coins in Cyprus would point to a (regular) movement of troops between the coast of the Levant and the island in the first year of the Arab invasions or to the retreat of part of the Byzantine troops to Cyprus after the defeat at the battle of Yarmuk.

This “military link” between the coast of the invaded Levant and Byzantine Cyprus could be further enhanced by another class of copper (Figure 6) coins (*folles* and *half-folles*) yielded from archaeological excavations at different sites of the island (like Kourion, Salamis and Nea-Paphos ⁽⁶²⁾). These coins bear a Syrian countermark with monograms of

(61) DONALD, *The Neapolis coin* ; IDEM, *Neapolis* ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 164.

(62) NICOLAOU, *Paphos* ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, and CALLOT, *Salamine de Chypre*.

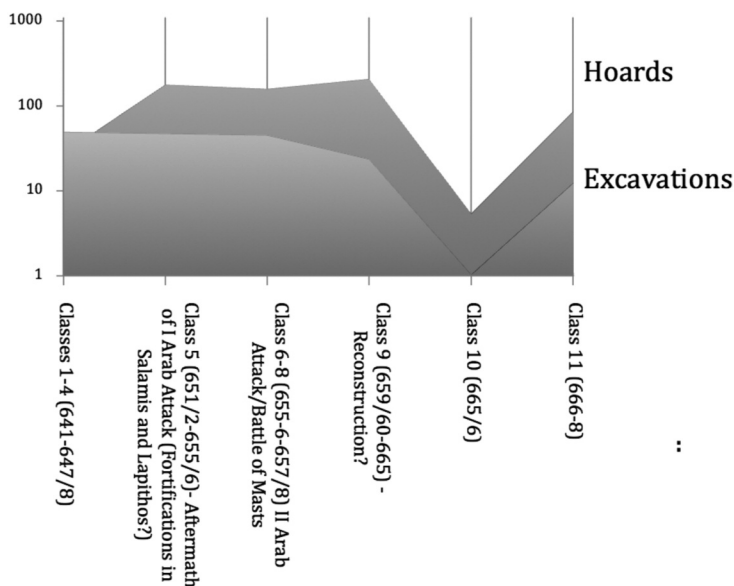


FIG 7. — Chronology of D.O.C. type copper coins of Constans II found in Cypriot hoards and excavations.

Heraclius and were struck at Caesarea Maritima ⁽⁶³⁾; although the reading of the monogram as Heraclius and the dating of these coins have been much debated, a recent detailed analysis of the host coins (*folles* and half-*folles* of year 20 of Heraclius' reign) and the distribution of countermarking led to assert a date between 633 and 636 A.D. (as strongly supported by the lack of countermarked coins in 3 large hoards of Byzantine coins found in Syria and hidden at the beginning of Muslim invasions) ⁽⁶⁴⁾. The lack of possible propagandistic or monetary reasons for striking these coins points again to military emissions struck at local military camps ⁽⁶⁵⁾ which started with the first Arab raids and continued with the necessity of reinforcements in Syria; countermarking ended, indeed, with the retreat of military troops, which — as

(63) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 16. On the countermarks with Heraclian monogram see EKONOMIDES, *Byzantine Folles*, and PRIGENT, *Le Rôle des provinces*, pp. 273ff.

(64) SCHULZE - SCHULZE - LEIMENSTOLL, *Heraclian countermarks*.

(65) VORDERSTRASSE, *A countermarked Byzantine coin*.

seen above and as proved by the diffusion of this coin type in Cyprus — could have found a (provisional) shelter in the island to regroup and reorganize.

To sum up, it seems possible that in the first half of the seventh century, Cyprus came to play an important role in the structures of Byzantine power: the military importance of the island, its integral role within the fiscal Byzantine network and its relevance as strategic hub along the interregional shipping routes (especially those linking Syria-Palestine and Egypt with Constantinople⁽⁶⁶⁾) — as showed by the numismatic evidence — might be paired with the results from the excavation in places like Salamis-Constantia. Indeed, here the stratigraphical analysis and the epigraphic evidence⁽⁶⁷⁾, allow us to say that in this very period the capital of the island was the centre of an acute imperial interest⁽⁶⁸⁾. The local archbishop was wealthy enough to sponsor the rebuilding of aqueducts, whereas the excavations at the so-called “Huilerie” yielded a large two-storeyed complex, possibly the Episcopal palace endowed with annexes and a chapel⁽⁶⁹⁾. This complex underwent a phase of restoration (dated to the early 7th century)⁽⁷⁰⁾, which pointed to a new functional role with commercial and artisanal significance⁽⁷¹⁾. Although we are in need of further archaeological excavation, it seems indeed possible to assume that during the reign of Heraclius (609-642 A.D.), Constantia retained its importance as political, religious and economic centre of Cyprus, which, in turn, was regarded as a strategic province of the Byzantine empire.

(66) Here it is worth mentioning the five gold hoards found on the island (METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 167) and dated to the period 632-653. These seem to point to the flee of some well-to-do merchants or aristocrats from Alexandria to Cyprus after the final occupation of Egypt by the Arabs in 642 A.D. However, one should also keep in mind that — although this event affected the so-called Constantinopolitan tax-spine (WICKHAM, *Framing*, p. 626 and IDEM, *The Inheritance*, p. 260) — Alexandria was not forbidden to Christians in the second half of the seventh century, for the Archbishop of Crete paid a visit to the city in 656 A.D. (METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 167) and the seventh-century pilgrim Arculf (McCORMICK, *Origins*, p. 174) got there a ship to travel to Constantinople (ADOMNAN, *De locis sanctis*, 226.5 - 228.38.).

(67) YON, *Salamine de Chypre* ; SODINI, *Epigraphica*.

(68) STEWART, *Domes of Heaven*, pp. 68ff.

(69) SARADI, *The Byzantine City*, p. 424. On the aqueduct, see SODINI, *Epigraphica*.

(70) ARGOUT - CALLOT - HELLY, *Salamine de Chypre*, pp. 50-51.

(71) *Ibidem*.

REIGN OF CONSTANS II (641-668 A.D.)

According to the Arab sources ⁽⁷²⁾, Mu'awiya — the Arab governor of Syria — staged the first Arab naval raid against Cyprus in 649 A.D. ⁽⁷³⁾, after having tried at least in two occasion (in 643 and 645 A.D.) to convince the Caliph ('Umar and then 'Uthmân) of the relative ease of the enterprise due to the proximity of the island to the coast of Levant ⁽⁷⁴⁾. Indeed, in 647 A.D. the threat represented by the strategic role of Cyprus was too big to ignore. From Cyprus the Byzantines had planned and set the sails for their ephemeral attack against Alexandria, aimed at re-conquering Egypt in 645 A.D. ⁽⁷⁵⁾.

Mu'awiya, using the combined power of the Syrian and Egyptian fleets, crossed from Acre to Cyprus with a large number of 120 ships ⁽⁷⁶⁾ (most of them Egyptian) and, attacked and sacked Salamis-Constantia ⁽⁷⁷⁾. The Arabic and Byzantine sources do not provide us with any detail concerning the plunder of the main urban centres ⁽⁷⁸⁾ of the island, but two inscriptions recently found in the atrium of the cathe-

(72) Mainly Baldhuri and Tabari (See KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus*, 182). The Arab primary sources are collected and summarized in VASILIEV - CANARD, *Byzance*; H. POTTIER - I. & W. SCHULTZE, *Pseudo-Byzantine Coinage*; MANSOURI, *Chypre*, and CHRISTIDES, *The Image*. A critique of these sources has been proposed by METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 395ff.

(73) On the Arab invasions of Cyprus see mainly BROWNING, *Byzantium and Islam*; CAMERON, *Cyprus*; MEGAW, *Betwixt the Greek and the Saracens*; CHRYSOS, "Cyprus"; DIKIGORPOULOS, *Cyprus 'betwixt Greeks and Saracens'*; KYRRIS, *The nature*, and METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 395-418 (the latter with further and updated bibliography on the *status quaestionis*).

(74) BALADHURI, *Futûh al-Buldân*, p. 235, and al Tabari in KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus*, p. 182.

(75) WHITTOW, *Making of Orthodox Byzantium*, p. 86.

(76) THEOPHANES THE CONFESSOR (MANGO-SCOTT, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 344, p. 478) and AGAPIOS (MAHBUB) OF MANBIJ (*Kitab al-'Unwan*, p. 480) exaggeratedly reported 1700 ships; AL-KÛFI, *Futûh*, p. 208) mentioned 250 ships whereas AL-MANQALI, *Ahkâm*, p. 63 (reported in MANSOURI, *Chypre*, p. 13) provided a more reasonable number with 120 vessels.

(77) VASILIEV - CANARD, *Byzance*, p. 59. Also MANSOURI, *Chypre*, p. 12.

(78) The so-called Syriac *Chronicle of 1234* (*Chronicle ad a. 1234*) mentions that "invaders saw the capital Constantia as prosperous and densely populated: Mu'awiya marvelled at its palaces and buildings and made a ceremonial entry to the city and took up his residence in the Episcopal palace" (CAMERON, *Cyprus*, p. 45).

dral of Soloi ⁽⁷⁹⁾, on the north-western coast of Cyprus, proved that the invasion had ruinous effects for the local basilica was destroyed. However the invaders, but were eventually were forced to retreat by the news of the imminent arrival of the Byzantine fleet led by the *cubicularius* Kakorizos ⁽⁸⁰⁾; but the road was open for another invasion, which took place four years later (653 A.D.) ⁽⁸¹⁾. The Arab raid was conducted by troops led by Abu'l A'war al Sulami ⁽⁸²⁾ and resulted in the sack or capture of most Cypriot coastal towns. According to the *Life of St. Therapon* the inhabitants of Kition (on the southern coast of the island) left and carried the relics of the saints with them ⁽⁸³⁾; Soloi and Constantia were stormed whereas the Syriac sources mention an attack of Abu'l A'war against "Pathos" ⁽⁸⁴⁾. This city should be identified with Paphos where allegedly ⁽⁸⁵⁾ an Arab garrison was set and a mosque was built ⁽⁸⁶⁾. Unfortunately, however, neither the Byzantine nor the Arab sources mention these cities. The latter can even be misleading: Baladhuri considers the second Arab attack on Cyprus as a punitive expedition because the Cypriots-Byzantines broke a treaty which was supposedly established between them and the Arabs after the first attack [...] In reality this is an anachronism [cause] Baladhuri transposed the later treaty between Mu'awiya and the Byzantine on the earlier period ⁽⁸⁷⁾.

Indeed, a peace treaty ⁽⁸⁸⁾ was ratified only after the first Arab attack against Constantinople in 654 A.D. (possibly in 659 A.D.) ⁽⁸⁹⁾, leaving the garrison in place at Paphos. Although the Byzantine and Arabic sources

(79) CHRYSOS, "Cyprus", p. 14; MEGAW, *Betwixt the Greek and the Saracens*, p. 512; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 221-224.

(80) MANGO-SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 344.

(81) BALADHURI, *Futûh al-Buldân*, p. 209; AL-TABARI, *History*, p. 111.

(82) BALADHURI, *Futûh al-Buldân*, p. 209.

(83) *Vita St. Therapon*, pp. 684-685.

(84) CHRISTIDES, *The Image*, p. 23.

(85) Baladhuri does mention the garrison but not its exact location on the island (BALADHURI, *Futûh al-Buldân*, p. 236). An exhaustive discussion of the problems related to the Arab presence in the condominium years can be found in CHRISTIDES, *The Image*, 24ff. and METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 379-424.

(86) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 458.

(87) CHRISTIDES, *The Image*, p. 24.

(88) On the concept of treaty in legal Islamic practice see MANSOURI, *Chypre*, pp. 33ff.

(89) HOWARD-JOHNSTON, *Witnesses*, p. 234.

often confuse facts and events and copied each other ⁽⁹⁰⁾, the archaeological evidence (number of marble slabs and locally made jars bearing Arabic inscriptions ⁽⁹¹⁾) and a passage from Baladhuri ⁽⁹²⁾ possibly point to the presence of Arab colonies side by side the local military force in Paphos. The treaty was then possibly re-drafted in 679-680 A.D. ⁽⁹³⁾ when, as a result of the failed Arab siege of Constantinople ⁽⁹⁴⁾, Constantine IV negotiated a thirty years peace with Caliph Mu'awiya. Although the sources on the treaty do not explicitly refer to Cyprus, it is possible that the Arab occupying forces were as withdrawn and only in 680/681 A.D. when the impending civil war and the defeat before the walls of Constantinople forced the Arabs to leave the island ⁽⁹⁵⁾. Baladhuri, indeed, reports that the departure of the Arab garrison was followed by the destruction of the area of the city where the mosque and their residence quarters were ⁽⁹⁶⁾.

The numismatic evidence of the period under consideration still points to the strategic role played by the island in the military operations the Byzantines were conducting in the Levant against the Arabs. If there was an Arab presence in Cyprus between 649 and 688 A.D. it is clear that the Arab institution did not prevent circulation of Byzantine coins of Constans II ⁽⁹⁷⁾. On the one hand, regular copper coins of the mint of Constantinople reached the island during the whole regnal period of Constans II (*folles* of 11 different types according to Grierson's typology, most of them bearing the inscription EN TOUTO NIKAI) ⁽⁹⁸⁾. On the other hand, the analysis of the stray finds (Khlorkas) ⁽⁹⁹⁾, the dif-

(90) IDEM, p. 145.

(91) For the jars see BAKIRTZIS, 'Αραβικοί αμφορείς; for the inscriptions and their date see CHRISTIDES, *The Image*, pp. 53-56.

(92) BALADHURI, *Futûh al-Buldân*, p. 236.

(93) ZONARAS III, 318; MANGO - SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 485ff.

(94) CAMERON, *Cyprus*, p. 42; KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus*, p. 160; BROWNING, *Byzantium and Islam*, p. 104.

(95) See KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus*, p. 160; BROWNING, *Byzantium and Islam*, p. 104; CHRISTIDES, *The Image*, pp. 30-31 and STEWART, *Domes of Heaven*.

(96) BALADHURI, *Futûh al-Buldân*, p. 236.

(97) CAMERON, *Cyprus*, p. 42.

(98) D.O.C., II, pp. 53ff.

(99) METCALF, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, pp. 30-34; IDEM, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 158 and 372.



FIG. 8. — *Follis* of Constans II (641-668 A.D.) bearing the inscription INPER CONST (D.O.C. 5). Obv. : Crowned Face facing bust, INPER CONST. Rev. : M, Γ below, ANA I, IIIr ; in ex. NEO.

ferent hoards found in Cyprus (Kharcha, Kyrenia, Soloi, Kornos Cave and the so-called Warren hoard ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾) and the results of the archaeological excavations (Saranda Kolones and Salamis ⁽¹⁰¹⁾) allow us to refine the picture in chronological and typological terms (Figure 7). Large quantities of *folles* of Constans II bearing the inscription INPER CONST (Figure 8) (with the crowned facing bust of the Emperor with no beard on the obverse and the mark value M with *officina* mark and mint provenance on the exergue) have been found in Cyprus. These are specimens struck on the last light issues of Heraclius and issued only in 643-644 A.D. They could be associated with the increased importance of Cyprus as military base after the loss of Egypt ⁽¹⁰²⁾. It must be also stressed that these coins also reached Syria where they circulated between 641-658 A.D. (they have been found at Apamea, Hama, Resafa, Bethlehem, Caesarea, Shiloh, Jerash) and so might be possibly associated with Byzantine raids on the coast or with a deliberate propagandistic intent ⁽¹⁰³⁾; in both cases the role of Cyprus in channelling Byzantine

(100) For a detailed check list of coin finds see METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 190-213 with further bibliography.

(101) CALLOT, *Salamine de Chypre* ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 171.

(102) D.O.C., II, p. 67.

(103) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, pp. 20-21.

<u>SALAMIS- CONSTANTIA</u> 13 Specimens (Imitative or Derivative; poorly struck) -660 c.a.	<u>PAPHOS (SARANDA KOLONES)</u> 2 Specimens - <i>Follis of Constans II</i> -20 <i>Nummia</i>	<u>KOURION</u>	Pseudo- Byzantine Coins
4 Specimens -Mint of Damascus -Mint of Ba'lbeek -Mint of Homs (with countermark <i>tayyib=good</i>) -Mint of Tiberias	1 Specimen -Mint of Damascus (Standing emperor type; countermarked <i>jayyid=excellent</i> ; very unusual for the <i>Um.Im.Im.</i> Coinage	1 Specimen -Mint of Ba'lbeek	Bilingual Series
6 Specimens -Mint of Damascus -Mint of Homs -Mint of Tiberias	4 Specimens -Mint of Tiberias	6 Specimens -1 Gold Dinar (720-1) -5 copper coins	Post- Reform (end of the seventh- beginning eighth century)

TABLE 1. — Arab-Byzantine copper coins in Cyprus.

copper coinage to the occupied region of the Levant can hardly escape. They were not the only Byzantine specimens reaching the neighbouring Syrian coast, however. Indeed, here regular denominations of Constans II's reign have been traced in hoards and excavation until 659 A.D. when they started tailing off (whereas, as seen above, in Cyprus they continued until 668 A.D.) ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾. By the same token, one should also analyse the distributive pattern of a type of *follis* minted in Constantinople and found in Cyprus in 651-652 A.D. (yet with the inscription INPER CONST but with the bust of a bearded emperor), but also in different Syrian sites like Apamea, Dehes and Hama. Again, the role played by Cyprus in funnelling Byzantine money to Syria and Palestine is clearly shown ; a role, indeed, matched with the function the island played at the opposite end of the "coin sea-route to Syria-Palestine" ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾.

In fact, although the great majority of coins in circulation in Syria after the Arab conquest imitated the issues of Constans II, some, as par-

(104) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 169-171.

(105) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 20.

tially mentioned before, imitated the last types of Heraclius ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾. Indeed, in the period 638-647 A.D. a peculiar type of Arab-Byzantine coins (called Cyprus imitation) circulated in Syria-Palestine (as they have been found in Apamea, Hama, Dehes, Resafa, Antioch, Bethlehem and Nessana) ; according to Foss ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ their peculiar technique identify them as a coherent group produced by a single Syrian mint or workshop. These Cyprus imitative coins can be regarded as the first coins produced under the new regime and appear to have been exported (by the Arab garrison in Paphos ?) to Cyprus, where some later countermarked examples (one from Salamis) are known ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. They have been dated to the period 660-673 A.D. and possibly point to the validation of what appeared to be an "irregular coinage" circulating in the areas of the island under Arab occupation.

Again here, it seems useful to me to conclude this section with some tentative remarks concerning the results of the excavations in Salamis-Constantia ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾, where after the Arab raids of 649 and 653 A.D., public baths, several houses around the gymnasium and churches (like the archbishopric basilica of Saint Epiphanius ⁽¹¹⁰⁾) were repaired. Moreover, a massive defensive wall was erected to protect some areas of the city ⁽¹¹¹⁾ (including the bishopric area), the aqueduct was further refurbished and two cisterns abutting into the former forum where built ⁽¹¹²⁾; the so-called Huilerie complex was partitioned and encroached by three different two-storeyed buildings (the first with an

(106) *Ibidem*, p. 22 ; here I am following the ideas of Pottier who have concluded that the most reliable criterion to date the so-called Arab-Byzantine coins is their weight, which seems to conform to the declining standard of the official Byzantine issue ; by this means he determined that the types imitating the Byzantine (Heraclian) issues of Cyprus are the earliest since their weight corresponds with a Byzantine standard. They should be dated between 638-647 A.D. (H. POTTIER - I. & W. SCHULTZE, *Pseudo-Byzantine Coinage*).

(107) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, pp. 22-24.

(108) *Ibidem* ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 171-175.

(109) DIKIGOROUPOLOS, *Cyprus 'betwixt Greeks and Saracens'* ; YON, *Salamine de Chypre* ; PAPACOSTAS, *Byzantine Cyprus* ; STEWART, *Domes of Heaven* ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 276-280.

(110) PAPACOSTAS, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 90 ; DIKIGOROUPOLOS, *Cyprus 'betwixt Greeks and Saracens'*, pp. 182-189 ; STEWART, *Domes of Heaven*, pp. 63ff.

(111) STEWART, *Domes of Heaven*, p. 73 ; MEGAW, *Archaeology on Cyprus*, p. 50.

(112) SODINI, *Epigraphica*, pp. 372-384 ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 387.

external portico, the second focused on a central court, and the third expanding beyond the limit of the complex) which occupied only the external fronts of the original *insula* ⁽¹¹³⁾. These activities allow us to affirm that the Cypriot capital was not suffering from a supposedly fatal blow stroke by the Arab incursions in 649 and 653 A.D. To the contrary, upon pairing the analytical results of the (still unpublished) excavations, with the results of the analysis of numismatic evidence, one could state that the island remain a quite vital and multifunctional (military, religious, fiscal, political) hub along the eastern Mediterranean shipping routes even during the second half of the seventh century ; if the Egyptian link seemed less viable, the relationships (of different nature) with the lost provinces of the Arab Levant were still much in place, and the role of Constantinople as main supplier of cash for the local troops and market was left unabated.

This was indeed partially reversed when the island returned fully in Byzantine hands. Indeed, locally countermarked copper coins of the reign of Constantine IV (668-685 A.D.) have been yielded by the excavators in Salamis-Constantia, Saranda Kolones (Paphos) and Kourion. This practice (Figure 9) was virtually limited to the *folles* emitted by Emperor

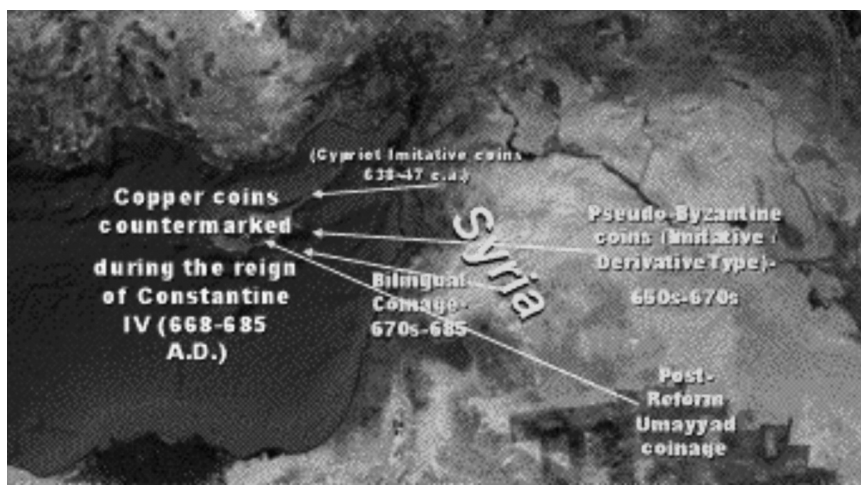


FIG. 9. — Provenience of Coinage circulating in Cyprus between 668-685 A.D.

(113) ARGOUT - CALLOT - HELLY, *Salamine de Chypre* ; YON, *Salamine de Chypre*, p. 329.

Constans II (but also found on Cypriot *folles* of Heraclius of years 17-18) and took the form of an imperial monogram impressed on the face of the coin with a circular or slightly oval die⁽¹¹⁴⁾. It goes without saying that this process could have different political and economic purposes : from prolonging coin life (by avoiding the complete re-striking process of new coins) to distinguish between bad and good issues ; from marking the accession of a new ruler to reinforcing the local acceptability of coins (a plausible function, since as will be seen- Arab Byzantine coinage were circulating in Cyprus in the last decades of the seventh century)⁽¹¹⁵⁾. But — as Grierson pointed out — the Cypriot countermarks seemed to have had an economic motive for they were imposed on light *folles* of Constans II at a time when Constantine IV was in process of introducing much heavier coins⁽¹¹⁶⁾. Indeed, the countermark included a large K meant to devalue the coin to *half-folles* value.

ARAB BYZANTINE COINAGE (Table 1)

It looks useful to me to conclude this contribution with a brief introduction to the Arab-Byzantine coinage which circulated in Cyprus and Syria-Palestine at the end of the seventh- beginning of the eighth century, that is during the period which opened with the retreat of the Arab garrison from Paphos, continued with the notorious treaty of 688 A.D. (between Justinian II and 'Abd-al Malik) ratifying a pre-existing arrangement (dated to 678 c.a. as seen above) sanctioning the division in equal parts of the tax revenues from Cyprus (the so-called *condominium*) between the Arabs and the Byzantines and ended with the eviction and return of part of the local population (including some Arab inhabitants) to the island in 699 or 705 A.D.⁽¹¹⁷⁾.

(114) D.O.C., II, pp. 53ff. ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 173.

(115) GOODWIN, *Arab-Byzantine coinage*, pp. 27-29 ; METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 175-176.

(116) D.O.C., II, p. 55. However, this interpretation, proposed by Grierson (as based upon the countermark K=20 carved on the face of the coins), has been partially revised due to discovery of some *folles* bearing the countermark X=10 and pointing to a bigger devaluation (i.e. 75% rather than 50% as previously thought). On this, see METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 173-174.

(117) For a detailed analysis of these events see mainly KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus* ; MANSOURI, *Chypre*, pp. 39-45 ; CAMERON, *Cyprus*, p. 43 ; MEGAW, *Betwixt the Greek and the Saracens* ; BROWNING, *Byzantium and Islam*, pp. 106ff. ; CHRISTIDES, *The*

The Caliphate and the Empire indeed used the treaty of 678 A.D. as a precedent for the agreement reached on Cyprus in 688 A.D.⁽¹¹⁸⁾. According to Theophanes, Caliph Abd al-Malik and Emperor Justinian II would share equally the tribute from Cyprus whereas the Emperor seized 12.000 Mardaites (to prevent their incursions against Arabs from Lebanon) and the Caliph agreed upon paying 365.000 *nomismata*, 365 slaves and 365 high-bread horses⁽¹¹⁹⁾. Arabic sources added that the total annual tribute of Cyprus was 14000 *nomismata* and that a clause forbade the disclosure of military information by either side to the other⁽¹²⁰⁾. It is however still unclear what the partition (or *condominium*) meant in practice⁽¹²¹⁾. Some scholars, like Metcalf⁽¹²²⁾, propound a real territorial partition with the Byzantines moving their capital to Laptha along the north-coast and the Arabs controlling the southern half of the island with Paphos as their main stronghold ; others, like Megaw, Malamut, Dikigoropoulos, Cameron and Browning⁽¹²³⁾ stress the meagre evidence at our disposal and regard Cyprus as a sort of buffer zone where the local population had freedom of movement and resettled into the internal rural mainland : Cyprus, nevertheless, managed to remain under the Byzantine influence mainly due to the importance of the local ecclesiastical hierarchy ; others, eventually, like Mansouri⁽¹²⁴⁾ slants towards the independent status of the island as dictated by the

Image of Cyprus, pp. 24ff. (including a full reference to primary sources) and METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 425-485. The forced Cypriot emigration is reported by THEOPHANES (MANGO-SCOTT, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 365, p. 509), CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS (*D.A.I.*, pp. 47-48) and MICHAEL THE SYRIAN (*Chronicon*, II.47) and analysed in detail by ENGLEZAKIS, *Cyprus. Nea Justinianopolis*.

(118) The exact date of the new treaty is disputed because of the chronological inconsistency of the sources (BROWNING, *Byzantium and Islam*, p.105) ; also METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 416ff ; CAMERON, *Cyprus*, p. 43 ; KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus*, pp. 160ff ; MANSOURI, *Chypre*, pp. 29ff.

(119) MANGO-SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. 506ff. ; also *D.A.I.*, 22.94.

(120) BROWNING, *Byzantium and Islam*, p. 106.

(121) CAMERON, *Cyprus*, p. 43.

(122) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 427ff.

(123) KYRRIS, *History of Cyprus* ; MANGO, *Chypre Carrefour* ; DIKIGOROUPOLOS, *Cyprus 'betwixt Greeks and Saracens'* ; CAMERON, *Cyprus*, pp. 40ff. ; MEGAW, *Betwixt the Greek and the Saracens* ; BROWNING, *Byzantium and Islam*, pp. 106ff ; MALAMUT, *Les îles*, pp. 67ff.

(124) MANSOURI, *Chypre*, pp. 44-45.

new political conditions that prevailed during the reign of Emperor Justinian II (686-705 and 705-711 A.D.) and Abd al-Malik (685-705 A.D.) that prevent one of the powers to gain the upper hand on the other.

It is, in my opinion, possible to readdress the ongoing debate on the status of Cyprus post-688 A.D. and supplement the scanty amount of primary sources ⁽¹²⁵⁾ of the period following the treaty by assessing the evidence provided us by archaeological excavations. Unfortunately, there is no space here to deal with a detailed analysis of the imported or locally made amphorae as well as the rural or town-based Cypriot ceramic industry ⁽¹²⁶⁾; here we are in need of collecting a reliable and informative pottery corpus which could provide us with dated diagnostic ceramic types ⁽¹²⁷⁾. It is, however, possible to use the coin evidence to present some preliminary considerations on the Cypriot economic environment and the persistence of levels of monetary economy as mirrored in the circulation patterns of the so-called Arab-Byzantine coinage in Cyprus as paired with the evidence coming from Syria and Palestinian sites ⁽¹²⁸⁾.

Indeed, some preliminary classificatory remarks are required to serve as orienting tools in the complicated world of Arab-Byzantine coinage before the famous reform introduced by 'Abd-al Malik in 697 A.D. With regard to this peculiar kind of coinage, two different types of classification can be used. The first and simpler one has been proposed by Goodwin ⁽¹²⁹⁾ and divides the specimens into three classes : Pseudo-Byzantine coins (dated to the period 650s-670s copying some Byzantine

(125) RYDEN, *Cyprus at the time of the Condominium*.

(126) See on this METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 229-246; also JACOBSEN, *Regional Distribution*; HAYES, *Problèmes de la Céramique*; TOUMA, *Céramique et problèmes*; CATLING - DIKIGOROPOULOS, *The Kornos Cave*; MEGAW, *Kourion*, pp. 435-476.

(127) In my opinion such an analytical approach requires an extensive comparative studies with the ceramic corpora found in those coastal regions surrounding Cyprus like Southern Asia Minor and Syria and Palestine (WALMSLEY, *Economic Developments*); indeed, Pamela Armstrong (*Trade in the east Mediterranean*) has recently written a contribution on these lines.

(128) On Syria and Palestine see mainly along WALMSLEY, *Early Islamic Syria*; HALDON, *Money, Power and Politics*, and WALMSLEY, *Coinage and Economy*, with further bibliography.

(129) GOODWIN, *Arab-Byzantine coinage*, pp. 14-27. A further type of classification has been recently proposed by WALMSLEY, *Coinage and the Economy*, p. 25.



FIG 10. — Bilingual Series (Minto offo Baa'lbeek). From Foss, *Arab-Byzantine Coinage*, p. 49. Obv. : Two Standing Figures, holding scepters and a globus cruciger ; cross between heads. Rev. : M, + above ; □ below ; ΗΛΙΟΥΣ ; ΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ ; in ex. BALABAAKK (in arab.).

prototypes although sometimes lacking of Greek or Latin legends), Umayyad Imperial Image coins (dated to the period 670s-690s with Byzantine-style images and meaningful legends, usually including mint names) and, eventually, Standing Caliph coins (with a new Islamic iconography usually including 'Abd-al Malik's name) ⁽¹³⁰⁾. The second type of classification has been recently introduced by Clive Foss, who, although indebted to Goodwin's work ⁽¹³¹⁾, proposed a further refinement of Pseudo-Byzantine category to be divided into two new classes ⁽¹³²⁾ : imitative coins (trying to reproduce the obverse legend of Byzantine coins, preserving a reverse legend and inspired by identifiable prototypes) and derivative coins (with no obverse or reverse legend and combining obv. and rev. which originally did not go together to create a new type). Moreover, Foss recommends a further re-assessment of the Umayyad Imperial Image coins, which should be divided between those belonging to the Standing Caliph and the Bilingual Series ⁽¹³³⁾ (Figure 10) (a systematic coinage in copper struck in different mints in Syria and Palestine between 670 and 695 A.D. and related to the organi-

(130) *Ibidem*, pp. 1ff.

(131) Foss, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, pp. VII-XI.

(132) *Ibidem*, pp. 25-37.

(133) *Ibidem*, pp. 42-51.

zation of a tax raising system in the four administrative-military districts (*junds*) according to which the entire territory of Syria and Palestine was divided (*jund* of Damascus in southern Syria, Homs in the north, Jordan in the centre and Palestine (*Filastin*) in the south) ⁽¹³⁴⁾.

In this presentation of the Arab-Byzantine coinage found in Cyprus I choose to follow Foss' categorization, because it allows presenting the material using a much detailed and chronologically considerate approach (Table 1).

As for the Imitative and Derivative Coins (all poorly struck and blundered) one should include thirteen *folles* recovered at Salamis-Constantia and three specimens (two *folles* and one 20-nummia) yielded from the excavations at Saranda Kolones ⁽¹³⁵⁾, whereas no specimens have been traced in Kourion ⁽¹³⁶⁾. Although these coins are commonly found in Syria and Palestine, 'it is still not known if they were the products of official mints or some sort of local initiative' ⁽¹³⁷⁾. It is possible that the large production of these coins started when the importation of Byzantine *folles* tailed off during the last decade of Constans II' reign (after 659 A.D.), although – in Goodwin's words – it is not clear 'if the curtailment caused the start of production or whether the realization that requirements for coinage could be met by local production caused them to curtail imports' ⁽¹³⁸⁾. Some specimens also presented counter-marks in Arabic (*tayyib* = good), which could again point to the validation of coins for fiscal purposes.

Far more interesting appear the results of the analysis of the (indeed fewer than those of the previous group) coins belonging to the so-called Bilingual series. Indeed, since these coins bear the mint-marks it is possible to reconstruct a preliminary and sketchy distributive and circulatory pattern concerning the findings in Cyprus which seems to be confirmed by the literary evidence. On the island, indeed, Bilingual Series coins have been found at Salamis (4 specimens), Saranda Kolones (one

(134) On the administrative reforms introduced by 'Abd'al Malik (about 691 A.D.) mainly KENNEDY, *The Armies of the Caliphs*; WICKHAM, *Framing*, pp. 130-144; WALMSLEY, *Early Islamic Syria*, pp. 72-75.

(135) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 213.

(136) BROWN, *Islamic coins*, pp. 422-423.

(137) FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, pp. 26-27.

(138) GOODWIN, *Arab-Byzantine coinage*, p. 18.

specimen) and Kourion (one specimen) ⁽¹³⁹⁾. The analysis of the mint mark on the coins from Salamis-Constantia reveals that two coins came from the *Jund* of Damascus (mint of Damascus and Ba'albeek), one from the *Jund* of Jordan (mint of Tiberias) and one from the *Jund* of Homs (this last specimen countermarked as *tayyib*=good) ; the unique coin from Saranda Kolones, countermarked as *jayyid*=excellent, portrays a standing emperor which seems to be very unusual among the specimens issued at Damascus ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ ; the only coin from Kourion came again from Ba'albeek ⁽¹⁴¹⁾. So, on the one hand, it seems that the main shipping route (possibly including movements of bulk commodities from the rich provinces of the Levant, diplomatic missions or pilgrimage journeys, like that made by Willibald in 723 A.D.) linked Cyprus (and mainly its capital Constantia) with the *Jund* of Damascus, whose coastland was geographically closer to the island and whose territory included the capital of the Caliphate. Indeed, one should not overlook the fact that two of the six specimens came from Ba'albeek, a city located in the northern Beqaa' Valley on the main route from Damascus to Homs. This city was the second most important administrative focus of the Damascene *Jund* and one of the major mints of the whole Syria and Palestine with a large number of competently engraved and well struck round coins ⁽¹⁴²⁾. There is no space here to deal with the different classes of this type of coins (three in total bearing different images on the obverse, the most common based on the *half-follis* of Thessalonica struck under Phocas' reign portraying also the empress Leontia). What is of great relevance here is the fact that the bond between Ba'albeek and Cyprus showed by these coins, is enhanced by the literary evidence, for in 653 A.D. — according to the Arab geographer Baladhuri — a number of Syrian colons (*Mawali*) was settled in the city of Paphos by Mu'awiya ⁽¹⁴³⁾.

(139) For Salamis see CALLOT, *Salamine de Chypre*, pp. 123-124 ; for Saranda-Kolones see METCALF, *Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader Coins*, pp. 215-217 and IDEM, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 213 ; for Kourion, BROWN, *Islamic coins* ; MEGAW, *Kourion*, and METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 211-212.

(140) METCALF, *Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader Coins*, p. 216 ; FOSS, *Arab-Byzantine Coins*, p. 45.

(141) BROWN, *Islamic coins*, p. 422.

(142) GOODWIN, *Arab-Byzantine coinage*, p. 49.

(143) BALADHURI, *Futuh Futûh al-Buldan*, pp. 156-157.

No Standing Caliph coins have been recovered in Cyprus ; instead, some post-Reform coins (i.e. post 692 A.D.) have been yielded by the archaeological excavations at Saranda Kolones (four specimens), Salamis-Constantia (six specimens) and Kourion (six specimens, among which a gold dinar of 720-721 A.D.) ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾. It is interesting to note that the provenience of these coins represent an analogous pattern to that of shown by the Bilingual series : copper coins dated to the end of seventh or the beginning of the eighth century and issued at Homs, Damasco and Tiberias. The absence of Ba'albek does not come as a surprise since the mint was closed down and absorbed by that of Damascus in 683-684 A.D. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾.

To sum up, the numismatic evidence of Arab-Byzantine coinage, sketchy as it is, seems to point to a different interpretative scheme than that adopted to interpret the fate of Cyprus after the Muslim raids and the occupation of Syria and Palestine. In other words one may not assert that the Cypriot urban centres were wiped out by the invaders, that the local population left the coasts to find shelter in the mainland and that the condominium regime was in truth a ratification of a status of no-man's land. Cyprus and its city were still frequented, preserving a variable but still traceable degree of monetary economy which included Byzantine emissions (coins issued by Justinian II, Tiberios and Leontios have been found in Constantia and Kourion ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾) and Arab specimens, inferring the maintenance of political, commercial and cultural (as pointed out by the complex issues of imagery and prototypes of all these coins) relations between the two empires. Is it, indeed, possible that -like in Syria-Palestine- an increasingly demonetarized economy meant continuous levels of wealth, but one sourced from and expressed within a different lifestyle ⁽¹⁴⁷⁾. Further archaeological excavations (with a much wider topographical perspective than those conducted so far and more stratigraphically-awareness), the publication of those still unpublished (like those at Saint Epiphanius in Salamis-Constantia, hopefully including ceramics ⁽¹⁴⁸⁾), and the re-assessment of the material from previous surveys and reports, would help to fill the

(144) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, p. 456.

(145) GOODWIN, *Arab-Byzantine coinage*, p. 65.

(146) METCALF, *Byzantine Cyprus*, pp. 177 and 211-213.

(147) WALMSLEY, *Coinage and the Economy*, pp. 39-40.

(148) On this STEWART, *Domes of Heaven*.

gaps in the Cypriot picture during the seventh and eighth century. Questions are always more numerous than answers : this presentation has tried to shed some light on a very difficult topic although still struggling to find some of these answers. My intention is to follow in this path, trying to assess the urban trajectories in Cyprus in the passage from late antiquity to the early middle ages. In this sense the contribution of numismatic (and sigillographic) evidence, is – as I tried to show – essential. I hope this article could be the first step along this road and pave the way to at least some of the answers the history of the sweet land of Cyprus has been waiting.

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SUMMARY

Located astride the shipping routes linking southern Asia Minor with the coasts of Syria and Palestine and Egypt, the island of Cyprus has always been regarded as a stepping stone of the cultural and economic communications interconnecting different areas of the eastern half of the Mediterranean. Politically this role has been first enhanced during the Hellenistic, Roman and then in the early medieval period when in the seventh century Cyprus acquired an important role as military Byzantine stronghold.

Economically, the significance of Cyprus in the passage from the late antiquity to the early middle ages (i.e. between 500 to 800 A.D.) benefitted from its essential role as hub along the eastern tax-spine through which Egypt fed Constantinople (until mid-seventh century) and along the long-distance trade-routes based upon the sea-movement of luxury goods.

This multifunctional role of Cyprus as a bridge between different regions of the eastern Mediterranean can be further assessed through the analysis of the numismatic (and partially sigillographic) material. Here, indeed, the study of the coins and coinage yielded by the archaeological excavations in urban centres like Salamis-Constantia, Paphos-Saranda Kolones, and Kourion should be paired with both the reassessment of the publication of the old Cypriot hoards and stray finds and the recent studies on the so-called Arab-Byzantine coinage (late seventh-beginning of the eighth century) found both in Cyprus and in the closer Syria-Palestine region. The examination of this material allows to develop a different interpretative scheme than the one traditionally adopted to interpret the fate of Cyprus after the Muslim raids and the occupation of Syria and Palestine. Cyprus and its cities were still frequented in the passage from late antiquity to the early middle ages, preserving a variable but still traceable degree of monetary economy including Byzantine emissions (dated to late seventh-beginning of the eighth century) and Arab specimens, inferring the maintenance of political, commercial and cultural (as pointed out by the complex issues of imagery and prototypes of all these coins) relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Umayyad Caliphate.

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